

Old Growth Strategic Review Panel
Ministry of Forest, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development
PO Box 9409 STN Provincial Government
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 9E2
via email: oldgrowthbc@gov.bc.ca

24 January 2020

Dear Mr. Merkel and Mr. Gorley,

RE: Strategic Review of Old-Growth Management in British Columbia

The Nature Trust of British Columbia focuses on securement and management of ecologically significant lands across BC. The Province has been an important conservation partner for almost 50 years. The securement and management of conservation lands in BC are critically important elements in maintaining ecological and cultural values of old growth forests for today's families and future generations.

As provided in the background information on the engagement website, the map of old growth and other forests in B.C. indicates that some of the 13.2 million hectares of old growth forest occurs on the private land base. The remnant old growth stands on Vancouver Island situated within the Esquimalt and Nanaimo Railway Land Grants, such as those found along the Koksilah River, are of particular importance for conservation given that 80% of the Coastal Douglas Fir zone is privately owned. Land trusts, such as The Nature Trust of British Columbia, are well positioned to aid in protecting old growth forest values in perpetuity on these private lands. There are willing sellers of private lands, however unfortunately much of the old growth and mature (or future old growth) forest that remains on BC's private land base is very expensive to purchase for conservation. The high cost per acre is most apparent in the biogeoclimatic zones of provincial conservation concern, including the Coastal Douglas Fir, Ponderosa Pine, and Interior Douglas Fir zones. There are federal funding programs, such as the Natural Heritage Conservation Program (NHCP), which could be used to help conserve these remaining old growth ecosystems. However, NHCP requires 2:1 non-federal matching funds, which is often difficult to procure in British Columbia.

As part of the strategic review of old growth management in British Columbia, we respectfully suggest that the Province considers establishing a program that provides funding to land trusts for securement of these ecologically sensitive ecosystems. Conserving old growth and mature forests on the private land base will maintain resiliency of BC's forests by providing connectivity across and along valleys, thereby bridging the gaps between the older forests located on Crown land. It will also contribute to achieving BC's climate action objectives. Finally, conserving old growth will support biodiversity conservation, and will help the Province achieve its objectives for habitat, wildlife, salmon and species at risk.

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The Nature Trust of British Columbia is fully committed to wildlife habitat conservation in BC and in contributing to this very important provincial initiative. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the “Strategic Review of Old-Growth Management” in British Columbia.

Sincerely,

Jasper Lament
Chief Executive Officer